

## **GALLUP SURVEY IN IRAQ**

**Government "A", November 11**

# **NEW CONSTITUTION: FREEDOM OF SPEECH, RELIGION, AND ASSEMBLY**

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While little progress had yet been made on the drafting of Iraq's next constitution, it is clear that Iraqis desire a form of government that is accountable to popular will. As reported earlier\*, a multi-party parliamentary democracy is the single most popular form of government among residents of Baghdad, and relatively few want to see the country governed along theocratic lines.

But beyond this, what specific freedoms do citizens want to see guaranteed by the country's next constitution?

Gallup's Poll of Baghdad asked a statistically representative sampling of all the city's 6.4 million adults whether they favor or oppose constitutional provisions that would guarantee freedom of speech, religious exercise, and assembly. None of these freedoms existed to any substantive degree under the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein; any exercise of them that was viewed as potentially disloyal or seditious was likely to be met with imprisonment, torture or even execution.

### **Freedom of speech**

Virtually without exception (98% "yes", 1% "no"), Baghdadis say that the new constitution should guarantee all Iraqis the right "to express their opinion on the political, social and economic issues of the day". No demographic group appears to view this as anything other than the most basic of civil rights.

To a large extent this freedom is already realized, even in the absence of a formal constitutional guarantee. Three quarters (75%) of Baghdad's residents told Gallup they now felt freer to express their political views in public than they did before the invasion that ousted Hussein's regime.

### **Freedom to Exercise Religion**

Similarly, the vast majority of Baghdad's residents – nearly nine in ten (86%) – believe that the country's next constitution should include a provision "allowing all Iraqi citizens to observe any religion of their choice and to practice its teachings and beliefs".

While different faiths and sects have long co-existed in the city, Iraq's Shi'ia community was seen as a source of opposition by the secular but Sunni-dominated Ba'athist regime. Shi'ites suffered severe repression, the execution of leading clerics, and an outright prohibition on many of the sect's forms of public religious observance.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Baghdad district expressing the strongest support for the free exercise of religion is overwhelming Shi'ite Sadr City (formerly known as "Saddam City"). Fully 94% of those in Sadr City support a constitutional provision guaranteeing freedom of religious practice and observance, whereas in a Sunni-dominated district such as Al Karkh, support for such a guarantee – though still strong – is somewhat lower (79%).

### **Freedom of Assembly**

The proposed constitutional provision for which the least popular approval is expressed is freedom of assembly—that is, a guarantee "allowing all Iraqi citizens to assemble or congregate for any reason or in support of any cause". Approximately two-thirds (68%) of those interviewed support such a guarantee, while one in four (25%) does not.

The minority who oppose such a guarantee may be motivated by a desire to maintain civil order and security – but also, perhaps, by concern among some Baghdad Sunnis over recent demonstrations in the city by followers of a dissident Shi'ite cleric.

## Separation of Religion and State

Gallup also asked respondents their views on the idea of keeping the Iraq's governmental sphere separate from any specific religious sanction – in other words, on separation of mosque and state.\*\* Two Baghdad residents in five (40%) said they supported the notion of keeping the state separate from religion, but a majority – 52% – said they personally opposed this principle.

Support for the separation of religion and state is to some degree conditioned by one's level of education. Support is nearly evenly split among those with a secondary school level of education or higher (47% support, 48% oppose), but significantly lower among those with no more than an elementary school level education (28% support, 56% oppose).

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\* (see: **What Form of Government for Iraq?**)

\*\* More specifically, our interviewers asked:

*"There is a notion, which calls for the separation of religion from state. What is your stance on this issue? Do you support it, or oppose it?"*

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**-- PHOTOS GO HERE --**

Photo 1 caption: "Seventh Day Adventist church in Central Baghdad"

Photo 2 caption: "Shopkeeper with paintings of sacred religious figures, Doura market"

Photo 3 caption: "Post-invasion Iraqi newspapers. A free and vibrant press is another key element of freedom of speech."

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7.2 Now suppose you had to choose only one of these forms of government. Which one would you prefer as the new government for Iraq.

	7.2		
Multi-party parliamentary democracy such as that in most European nations, US and some Asian countries	39		
An Islamic democracy, such as that in Pakistan.	2		
An Islamic theocracy in which religious leaders or Mullahs have a strong influence, such as in Iran.	10		
A conservative Islamic theocracy, such as existed in the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan	*		
A conservative Islamic kingdom, such as that in Saudi Arabia	5		
A royal constitutional regime such as the one prevailed in Iraq before 1958	8		
A system based on the Islamic concept of Shura (mutual consultation)	29		
Do not know	6		

\* = less than half of one percent

10.1 After the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and British forces, which of the following, if any, has happened to you personally or to members of your household before the invasion?

%

Felt freer to express any political views in public **75**

8. As I read off possible provisions that might be included in a new constitution, would you tell me whether you agree or do not agree on the inclusion of each of these provisions:

		Agree	Disagree	Do not know	Refused
1	Freedom of speech - allowing all Iraqi citizens to express their opinion on the political, social and economic issues of the day.	98	1	1	0
2	Freedom of religion - allowing all Iraqi citizens to observe any religion of their choice and to practice its teachings and beliefs.	86	13	1	0
3	Freedom of assembly - allowing all Iraqi citizens to assemble or congregate for any reason or in support of any cause.	68	25	5	2

16. There is a notion, which calls for the separation of religion from state. What is your stance on this issue? Do you (READ OUT)

Oppose it, or **52**  
Support it **40**  
Don't know **8**





